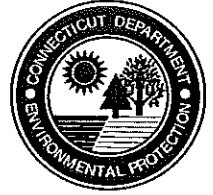




STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



Public Hearing – February 18, 2011
Transportation Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Amey W. Marrella
Department of Environment Protection

Committee Senate Bill No. 723 - AN ACT EXTENDING THE EXEMPTION FROM EMISSIONS TESTING FOR NEW VEHICLES

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Committee Senate Bill No. 723 - AN ACT EXTENDING THE EXEMPTION FROM EMISSIONS TESTING FOR NEW VEHICLES. The Department of Environmental Protection (Department) offers the following testimony.

This bill will extend the exemption for new cars from emissions testing from its current four year exemption to a five year exemption. The Department certainly understands the desire to extend the current exemption for new cars under the Connecticut Motor Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance (I/M) Program from four years to five years, but doing so will impact Connecticut's air quality plans and require offsetting emission reductions from other sources in Connecticut, many of which are still recovering from the current recession.

The I/M program is federally mandated under section 182(c)(3) of the Clean Air Act (CAA) because Connecticut's air quality fails to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for surface level ozone (i.e., smog). The I/M program works by identifying polluting vehicles through periodic inspections and ensuring they are repaired. While today's vehicles emit much less air pollution, their emissions control systems are increasingly complex and vehicles may be gross polluters without creating any operational problems to the average driver. The I/M program is a federally enforceable commitment in Connecticut's air quality plan—the State Implementation Plan (SIP)—and additionally represents a significant component of Connecticut's clean air strategy. The I/M program accounts for about 10% of the emissions reductions necessary to meet our clean air goals. A change such as the one proposed by S.B. 723 would significantly reduce the air quality benefits associated with the program and could lead to the remaining vehicles becoming subject to annual emissions testing.

Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to issue a more stringent ozone NAAQS this year, which will make Connecticut's air quality challenges even greater. Because the transportation sector accounts for over 40% of smog forming emissions in Connecticut, a new ozone standard will require additional, not fewer, emission reductions from the transportation sector. The exemption proposed in S.B. 723 could have the unintended consequence of imposing an unfair, additional burden on Connecticut's business sector to account for environmental backsliding from the transportation sector.

Furthermore, the failure rates of vehicles in their first year of emission eligibility remain significant. The failure rate was 8.29% for model year (MY) 2005 vehicles in 2008; 8.74% for MY 2006 vehicles in 2009; and 7.39% for MY 2007 vehicles in 2010. The high number of vehicles failing in their first year highlights the need to maintain the exemption at four years for new vehicles.

Finally, many vehicle warranties remain valid at the time of the first emissions test for new vehicles. Increasing the inspection exemption to five years may do a disservice to Connecticut motorists by moving their first test beyond the warranty period for their emissions control systems, which are increasingly complicated and costly to repair.

In summary, the Department opposes proposed Senate Bill No. 723 because it would reduce the air quality benefits of the I/M program, require the Department to seek additional emission reductions from other source categories, and reduce the consumer protection benefits to the citizens of the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's views on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact the Department's legislative liaison, Robert LaFrance, at (860) 424-3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov.